

A THIRD GENERATION'S PERSPECTIVE ON EESTI MAJA TULEVIK

Esmaspäev, 24 Aprill 2017 07:19 Eesti Elu / Estonian Life Onlinee

As a third generation member of the Toronto-Estonian community, I am writing this to articulate my reasons for supporting the proposal to start the due diligence process to move the Eesti Maja to Madison Ave.

While 958 Broadview holds many fond memories for me, I agree with the facts that the current Eesti Maja has reached the end of its lifespan. Even if the resources required to revive it were available, I believe it is time to move on to a space that is more suitable and sustainable for the long term. It is clear from the usage statistics, which show a steady decrease, that the Eesti Maja is not viewed as an attractive rental space to those both inside and outside of our community - **people have already voted, with their feet!** We need a facility to be able to sustain itself on its own merit, and not on subsidization. At Madison, it appears that we would be able to create an attractive, flexible space for our own purposes that can also provide desirable rental spaces for the busy surrounding neighbourhood when not in use by us. The location, in the middle of downtown Toronto and close to U of T, means that there will likely be strong demand from a wider variety of potential renters, and having a new and modern space will make us an attractive option.

The plans to simply renovate our existing space just does not seem worthwhile. Beyond the numerous technical and financial issues, and the likely need to vacate while this work would be happening, the fundamental layout of the Broadview building just cannot be fixed (washrooms not well positioned to serve the halls, a single kitchen shared between the halls, the need to pass through the crystal saal to get from the front of the building to the back on the second floor, the consulate and noorte room are only accessible by staircases, storage space has spilled into public space (pianos in the hallways, chairs in the coatroom, etc...)). I loved these 'features' when I was in lasteaed playing hide and go seek, but beyond that there is little merit to this layout -- not to mention the accessibility issues from mobility restrictions becoming more common in our aging community. The lack of accessibility makes it impossible for my grandparents to even come to the Eesti Maja.

While we do have a long history with 958 Broadview, and it is important to respect that, **we need to take this window of opportunity to move forward.** Keeping to traditions is part of Estonian culture, but so is pressing on into the future and innovating with what we have. That's how Eesti continues to progress technologically today, and that's the facet of our modern heritage that we should look to model our local future on. We can incorporate our cultural heritage into the most fundamental parts of the Madison design, such as the map cutout courtyard, instead of just though the paintings on its walls. It offers a great location, lots of flexible accessible space, and a

closer connection to other facets of our community, such Tartu college, and the proposed VEMU. We could have a building that brings together all generations of our shrinking community and shows our strength and Eesti pride!

I truly appreciate all of the work put in by those who established the Eesti Maja, and more recently by the dedicated volunteers tackling the challenging projects of both Eesti Maja tulevik and Eesti Maja maintenance, both ongoing since before I was even an hellake. The fact is that the options to accommodate an Eesti Maja into a condo building built at Broadview Ave with a developer partner have not panned out, but **we have identified this new opportunity that we should seize.**

While I will not able to vote come Tuesday, **I hope that the shareholders will appreciate this opportunity and allow the due diligence process to begin.**

Krista Poolsaar